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ABSTRACT

This study of six urban children ages 8-12 years challenges the prevailing misconception that poor city children are troubled, passive, and unintelligent. The research involved interviewing children about how and what they played and having them discuss drawings that they made about play. Guided by these children, who live in New York's East Harlem, the book goes behind the scenes to unveil the breadth and depth of their curiosity, industry, and imagination. The children show how, through play, they imagine and build new worlds. After describing the six children and discussing research on children's play, the book examines the approaches used to enter into the three-dimensional structures the children built. Next, it describes what the children do and how they plan. The study showed that the children took their play seriously, they gave friendship great significance, and they imagined and constructed complex worlds in which they authored scripts, built and managed sets, and acted as the stars. The book concludes with practical suggestions to help city teachers in their attempt to get to know city children (e.g., create rich environments, let children participate actively, and teach by listening). An appendix presents details of the study. (Contains approximately 65 references.) (SM)

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